

For Immediate Release

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*Washington, D.C.*- Today, Congressman Sires joined his colleagues in the House of Representatives in passing H.R. 3961, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act, by a vote of 243 to 183 to permanently reform the way Medicare pays physicians. This bill, introduced as companion legislation to the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) that the House passed earlier this month, would repeal a 21 percent fee reduction scheduled for January 2010 and replace it with a stable system that ends the cycle of threats of ever-larger fee cuts followed by short-term patches.

“Six times since 2002, Congress has had to step in to prevent deep reductions in physicians’ pay calculated by the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate formula,” expressed Congressman Sires. “This bill creates a sustainable solution for Medicare payments to physicians in order to prevent profound decreases in physicians’ pay in the future that could jeopardize seniors’ access to their doctors.”

Specifically, H.R. 3961 would replace the pending 21 percent fee cut with an update for 2010 based on the Medicare economic index while a new payment system is being put in place. This bill would also provide an extra growth allowance for primary care services to promote access to primary care practitioners in Medicare, as well as encourage the formation of Accountable Care Organizations which would incentivize physicians to take responsibility for improving quality and reducing costs. Furthermore, this legislation would end a budget gimmick that artificially reduces the deficit by assuming physician payments will be cut by 40 percent over the next several years even though Congress has consistently intervened to prevent those cuts from occurring

“This legislation is supported by a wide range of organizations representing patients, doctors and other providers- including the American Medical Association, AARP, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Surgeons, and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. Combined with the Affordable Health Care for America Act it will improve Medicare and seniors’ access to care,” stated Congressman Sires.

H.R. 3961 is now under review in the Senate.

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